

# Hydrocodone/ Hydrocodone Bitartrate/ Hydrocodone with Acetaminophen



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**Resource Center  
State of California  
Alcohol and Drug Programs  
1700 K Street  
First Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814**



**(800) 879-2772 (California Only)**

**(916) 327-3728**

**FAX (916) 323-1270**

**TTY: (916) 445-1942**

**Internet: <http://www.adp.ca.gov>**

**E-Mail: [ResourceCenter@adp.state.ca.us](mailto:ResourceCenter@adp.state.ca.us)**

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## What is Hydrocodone?

Hydrocodone is a semisynthetic narcotic analgesic (pain reliever) and a cough suppressant, similar to codeine. The drug is an opiate prescribed for the relief of moderate to moderately severe pain, mainly for back pain and migraine headaches. **Recently, hydrocodone has come under fire for being a heavily abused prescription drug.**

## Intended Use

Frequently, hydrocodone and acetaminophen (brand name Tylenol®) are combined to achieve pain relief, as in Vicodin and Lortab. Acetaminophen is a non-narcotic analgesic and antipyretic (fever reducer). Acetaminophen relieves pain by elevating the pain threshold. It reduces fever through its action on the heat-regulating center of the brain.

The drug is listed as #3 of the 200 most popular prescriptions, as ranked by RxList, an Internet drug information source. The list represents nearly 2/3 of all prescriptions filled in the United States and the majority of searches of the RxList database.

## Federal Regulation

Hydrocodone with acetaminophen tablets are subject to the Federal Controlled Substance Act (Schedule CIII). Some doctors are urging the Food and Drug Administration to make it a Schedule II drug, where its medical utility is recognized but the substance is highly regulated. Cocaine and morphine are Schedule II drugs.

## Usage

Hydrocodone appears to be safe for 3 to 5 days. Mental and physical dependence can occur, but are unlikely when used for short-term pain relief. Hydrocodone with acetaminophen tablets should be prescribed and administered with caution.

The usual medical dosage of hydrocodone and acetaminophen is in tablet form, consisting of 5mg or 7.5mg hydrocodone/500mg acetaminophen and should be taken with food. The precise pain relief mechanism of hydrocodone is not known, although it is believed to relate to opiate receptors found in the central nervous system.

## Dependence

Physical dependence assumes clinically significant proportions only after several weeks of continued narcotic use, although some mild degree of physical dependence may develop after a few days of narcotic therapy. The rate of development of tolerance varies among patients.

## Effects

Hydrocodone can depress breathing, and is used with caution in elderly, debilitated patients and in patients with serious lung disease. It can impair thinking and the physical abilities required for driving or operating machinery. Alcohol and other sedatives can produce further brain

impairment and even confusion when combined with hydrocodone. Pregnant and nursing mothers and children should generally avoid usage of hydrocodone.

**Side Effects**

The most frequent side effects include lightheadedness, dizziness, sedation, nausea, and vomiting. Other side effects include drowsiness, constipation, and difficulty in urinating.